

# *wound jewelry*

by **bill yarrow**

*new aesthetic*

2010

## **I Am Not a Corpse**

A corpse cannot cry. A man who cannot  
cry is a corpse. I am not a corpse, alas.  
If I were, I'd be in a suit. If I were, I'd be  
the main event, the center of attention.  
All the vultures would be my friends.  
All the grubs would love me.  
I'd be in touch with dirt, the slime divine,  
the slutty mud, the lovely muck.  
Or something a little more incendiary,  
a mite more vital, robust, fume inducing.  
Back to my thesis: a corpse cannot cry.  
The tear ducts are bankrupt in death.  
There's a haughtiness that sets in, that  
sees in raw emotion its sour avatar.

---

## **Mussel Memory**

Andreas Cappelanus taught that the word  
“love” comes from the word meaning  
“to fish.” I used to fish off a bridge on  
the Eastern Shore. There’s a picture of  
me on a rampart holding a flounder  
who sought his Maker on my hook.  
My hair is disheveled and my chest  
is puffed. I’m holding the flounder by  
the tail and motioning to my cousin  
who was to die before his daughter  
turned two. I had plans that night  
to borrow a towel and lie down under  
the pier with this blowzy Towson girl,  
but I had a love and could not be untrue.

---

## **Knot Eye**

The diagnosis was peculiar, the doctors agreed,  
but so was the condition. He had knot eye.  
He was unable to see a piece of string, but he  
could see the knot. He was unable to make out  
a plank, but he could see the darkened whorl.  
He was unable to see his girlfriend's discomfort,  
but he saw her stomach tighten as they discussed  
Thanksgiving. She wanted to get married. He was  
afraid. Their bickering led to lumpy disagreements,  
but he knew sooner or later they'd fall back into  
each other's arms. That's the way it is with the world.  
What waits for us at the end is embrace. He stared  
into the large mirror in her living room and watched  
as she wound her stringy arms around his skinny neck.

---

## **Florid Psychosis**

On the advice of a friend, I've stopped dreaming. But as a result, I've developed a florid psychosis in which everything I've dreamed for the last thirty-three years is now real. I have new friends, a new job, my dead relatives have all come back, I'm half my weight, have all my hair, reside in Prague. It's February 1924. Kafka won't die until June. Freud's 67. He's just published *The Ego and the Id*. I refuse, on principle, to read it. Lotte Reininger is working on the cutouts for *Prince Achmed*. I bought a radio embroidered with pearls. It doesn't work, but why, why, why does it have to?

---

## **Dad and the Red Light**

My father is twenty-two years old. He's stopped at a light at Broad and Market. He sees a guy in a tan jacket start to cross in front of him. All of a sudden, the guy disappears. The light turns green. Confused, my father gets out and walks to the front of his car. The guy is face down on the ground, his head wedged in front of the passenger wheel. He picked out my dad as his agent of suicide.

I've been obsessed with this story ever since I was told it when I was fourteen or so. Dad was, illustrating to me the key importance of checking things out. Then I saw, all his life, wannabe suicides flit towards him like moths. He saved them all.

---

### **Hope's Amanuensis**

I was hope's amanuensis  
but I was low on carburetor  
oxygen and my fraud protection  
just lately had expired. If asked  
how I was feeling, I would have said,  
"Triangular," but the truth was  
I felt an osculatory unhappiness  
circumnavigate my soul. I was no  
stranger to such feelings. Indeed,  
they had inhabited me even longer  
than prose had been degraded, but  
there are worse things in the world  
than unhappiness: capillary wealth.  
contagious cleansing, wound jewelry.

---

## **Great Moments in Blindness**

I am complicit in the darkness. It trails  
after me like the milky spoor of a mother  
skunk. I breathe it out in stumpy conversation  
I must have learned from television. Well, this  
lack of vision is my own fault. I should have  
known better than to circumcise my heart  
and bathe my eyes in witch hazel.

I was already an adult when I stood in that cage  
with you. We bent our knees and rocked it  
side to side, higher and higher, and you laughed,  
you laughed, and when we almost sent it over  
the top, you screamed with laughter, you  
shrieked. For joy. But you weren't laughing.  
No. I see it now. You were just screaming.

---



### **Drinking an Orange Julius While Listening to Pink Floyd**

I was strapped for cache  
so I called my friend Paolo  
who wears Ecuadorian gray  
and prefers Celine to Celan  
and asked him how to juggle  
all the crap life was throwing  
my way, and he said, “Boyo,  
take your chessboard to Andorra  
and mate someone” but, having  
already done that, he was of no help  
at all, so I grabbed one of my shelf  
improvement books and read: “I  
saw the best minds of my generation  
enter law school” and realized that  
all the works I thought I knew had  
been defaced by assassins. I asked  
the Wife of Bathroom for a hit of  
Aleve. She handed me the anodyne  
and went off to make chicken  
a la Siegfried. I drifted into dream:  
A man in a turquoise slicker sat on  
a skittish horse wearing an iron hat.  
He was pointing at a group of children  
in the housewares section of Wal-Mart  
playing catch with the throw rugs. A  
tsunami was rolling through the aisles.  
The man bellowed, “Watch out!” but he  
couldn’t force their attention. The waters  
poured over all the products of mankind.  
Death came as a scythe of relief.

### **In My Nephritic Dreams**

In my dreams, God is toxic. In my dreams,  
heroism feels cowardly. In my dreams,  
traveling west is an oxymoron. In my dreams,  
I confuse Kurt Vonnegut with Kurt Waldheim.  
In my dreams, I forget Arthur Schopenhauer's  
first name. In my dreams, the Spanish and the  
Bermuda onion vie for a place on the Danish  
pastry. In my dreams, a bazooka is a measure of time.  
In my dreams, the word "expostulate" means "to cough."  
In my dreams, the remoulade contains traces of sulfur.  
In my dreams, instead of a cap on my head, I wear  
a "trade." In my dreams, I watch a sand shark sleep  
on a coral bed. In my dreams, the chickens come home  
to rooster. In my dreams, I am awake most of the night.

---

### **Sewer, 1962**

if you drop a quarter  
in a sewer,  
there's no way  
of getting it back

save finding a long  
stick and putting  
chewed gum on one end  
and poking for it

that is, if that's  
your only quarter  
and you really need it  
(yeah, you really need it)

you really want to see  
the air-conditioned matinee  
of Damon and Pythias  
with your brother

but on the way there  
your mother dies  
in labor and you  
remain an only child

---

### **Pack Me in Raw Salt**

I poured bleach on the bloody moon  
and turned it flounder white. Then I  
wrote my autobiography on it in ash.  
When the bill came due, I joined the  
cowboys who navigate by fear. They  
locked me in a cabin inhabited by  
moles. I escaped through the mirror  
and landed in a lake. I baked for weeks  
in seaweed and lost a lot of flesh.  
Jesus picked the barnacles off me  
and packed me in raw salt. I healed  
in time to see the soldiers welcomed  
home. A barker was selling cosmetic  
hope. It was Gatlinburg in mid July.

<http://newaesthetic.in/e-books/e-book-wound-jewellery-by-bill-yarrow.html>